

# Juvenile Justice Advisory Group

## RESOLUTION 2023-2

Ensure Equitable Resource Alignment to Improve Student Success

1 Resolution: To enhance and align quality resources in the school environment and  
2 surrounding community that ensure students can meaningfully engage in education.

3 PURPOSE: For the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group of the District of Columbia (JJAG) to build  
4 on Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) Report and system prevention reform efforts by  
5 uplifting the challenges expressed by school-based personnel, school-based partners,  
6 students, and families about gaps and challenges that impact school attendance.

7 WHEREAS: The JJAG provides active consultation to the Mayor and government agencies to  
8 ensure the provision of comprehensive delinquency prevention programs designed to reduce  
9 delinquency and status offense behaviors and meet the needs of youth through the  
10 collaboration of many local systems with which a youth may interface.

11 WHEREAS: The District's Three-year Plan for Delinquency Prevention, as approved by the  
12 Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) under the  
13 Title II Formula Grant Program, outlines that JJAG's primary goal is to develop and strengthen  
14 preventative services and advise on local policy changes designed to reduce the number of  
15 youth entering the juvenile justice system.

16 WHEREAS: In furtherance of that goal, JJAG supported the District in applying for and winning  
17 an award of competitive federal funds from the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile  
18 Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to expand the DC Department of Human Services,  
19 Parent and Adolescent Support Services (PASS) program to pilot a school-based effort  
20 specifically focused on high-risk schools and students identified as truant from school, and  
21 thus, at-risk for system involvement.

22 WHEREAS: JJAG's role in supporting the PASS expansion pilot led to identification of systemic  
23 resource challenges impacting student success and consistent attendance. Through several  
24 qualitative data collection methods, the following key challenges were identified: (1) lack of  
25 access to quality hot meals in schools, (2) lack of safe and accessible transportation to school,  
26 (3) insufficient mental health and behavioral health supports, (4) community safety concerns,  
27 and (5) school staffing challenges.

28 WHEREAS: The JJAG recommends the District complete equity assessments across public and  
29 charter schools to further understand and identify systemic resource challenges (e.g., meals,  
30 safety, and staffing).

31 WHEREAS: The assessment should be completed in partnership with the OSSE Education  
32 Research Practice Partnership, the Mayor's Office of Racial Equity, education partners, and

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1 community members with the goal of informing future budget development and investment  
2 decisions that address identified disparities.

3 THEREFORE: The JJAG recommends that the District equip the appropriate entity or entities  
4 with the resources to complete and publish the assessments referenced above within one  
5 year and work with relevant partners to create a responsive strategic plan that prioritizes  
6 investments to remedy identified disparities in education resources.

## Resolution 2023-02 Committee Report

### Background

In February 2020, JJAG published “Create Opportunities for [“Persons in Need of Supervision \(PINS\) to Succeed without Legal System Intervention.”](#)”

### **The report makes the following recommendations to the Mayor:**

1. Respond to PINS behaviors in the community, rather than through the juvenile justice system. Support legislation to remove all mentions of “PINS offenses” as prosecutable offenses from Chapter 23 of Title 16 of the DC Code and make conforming amendments including to the Attendance Accountability Act.
2. Invest in and realign resources to provide youth, families, and caregivers across all wards with 24-7 access to culturally relevant and linguistically competent opportunities to grow that meet the needs of every family.
3. When PINS behaviors do occur, ensure multiple, “no wrong door” access points to services outside of law enforcement or juvenile justice agencies, including schools and community-based “hubs.”
4. Create a non-law enforcement mechanism for the safe transport of youth who are not suspected of a crime to home or to places where they can receive services.
5. Enhance training for all District employees and service providers on topics such as cultural humility, trauma-responsive care, and positive youth development.
6. Create mechanisms for youth, families of served youth and the community to lead reforms and to hold agencies, philanthropy, and service providers accountable.

JJAG continued to prioritize this work in 2021 and 2022 by developing implementation recommendations in support of the PINS Reform recommendations, including passing a resolution in 2022 called [Enhancing Responses to Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy](#).

JJAG’s work is also guided by a [Three-year Plan for Delinquency Prevention](#), outlining our primary goal to develop and strengthen preventative services and advise on local policy changes designed to reduce the number of youth entering the juvenile justice system. Consequently, JJAG continues to seek and utilize federal funding to support implementation of prevention services. Most recently, JJAG supported OVSJG and DHS in applying for and winning a \$1.5 million dollar grant award from the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to strategically expand the DC Department of Human Services (DHS) Parent and Adolescent Support Services (PASS) Intensive Case Management (ICM+) program.

Through JJAG’s continued engagement with the DHS PASS ICM+ expansion, the JJAG PINS Committee continued to engage with and support DHS staff as they worked to integrate into Kramer Middle School this year and launch the pilot grant program. Through this collaboration, JJAG was able to review qualitative data collected from students, parents, school-based staff, and community-based providers, and JJAG learned that the attendance and school engagement challenges many at-risk students face are often interconnected with systemic disparities.

For this resolution, JJAG seeks to uplift five key challenges impacting student attendance and engagement:

- (1) Some schools lack quality meal resources.
- (2) Transportation challenges are a common barrier for students.
- (3) Mental and Behavioral Health Resources.
- (4) Community safety concerns are a major barrier and concern for parents and students.
- (5) Staffing vacancies at the school-level remain a challenge to student engagement and learning.  
Please see JJAG Resolution: [Enhancing Responses to Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy](#) for JJAG's recommendations improving staffing and care coordination for students at risk of chronic absenteeism and truancy.

### **Resolution / Recommendations**

JJAG is recommending a deeper assessment(s) be conducted of public and charter school resources to understand how and where these systemic challenges and barriers are impacting student success and attendance. JJAG recommends the assessment(s) be conducted with an equity lens and that resulting recommendations be utilized to inform future budgeting or school resource development to directly respond to identified disparities.

JJAG also identified several areas within each of the named key challenges for consideration in designing the assessment(s). The list of considerations below is not exhaustive but can be utilized to guide the design and implementation of the assessment(s).

- (1) **Meals:** JJAG recommends assessment design consider meal resources across schools.  
Considerations should include:
  - a. Current contracts for meal resources
  - b. The quality of meal resources at different schools. Some schools have kitchens and chefs that provide hot meals onsite, and some have meals delivered via contractors.
  - c. Review facilities and structures to determine if there are additional resources needed in school kitchens or in cafeterias to support delivery of quality meals.
  - d. Review logistics on how meals are prepared and delivered to ensure quality at the time provided to students to eat.
  - e. Collect feedback from students about what they want to eat.
  - f. Consider how supplemental fundraising efforts (e.g., PTA/PTO funds) are utilized to fill gaps and how schools may supplement meal resources. How does that impact what the school is able to offer?
  - g. Consider schools that do not have kitchens and ways to bridge the gap that this causes in both meal and personnel resources in the building that support students (i.e. dedicated staff at school that focus on meals and nourishing our kids as the purpose/impact of their work).

- h. Consider schools' ability to provide healthy and nutritious meals with available resources.
- i. Consider after school snack/food offerings for youth who stay (or want to stay) for enrichment activities or after school initiatives.

(2) **Transportation:** JJAG recommends assessment design consider resources for transportation and consider factors like age, distance/access to available resources, and students attending non-neighborhood schools.

Considerations should include:

- a. Utilization and convenient access to bus or metro (ability to use Kids Ride Free resources).
- b. Distance of METRO or bus stop to school (is the transportation getting students within 2 blocks of the school building?).
- c. Resources that exist to support students who do not live near a METRO or bus stop (offering alternative transport options like DDOT transport, DC School Connect, ride share or shuttle, offering walking school bus programs from bus stops or METRO stations, etc).
- d. Conduct a review of where students live and the METRO/bus routes available.  
Recommendation: consider developing some standards (i.e. elementary school kids/families should not be expected to transfer trains or buses)
- e. Consider youth are involuntarily transferred to alternative schools and what transportation supports are provided to those youth who the District has already identified as at risk of school disengagement? For involuntary transfers, expelled students, students/victims of crimes or bullying that request to transfer schools, and system involved youth that are transferred for various reasons, there are additional considerations and needs. Creation of protocols to ask the youth/family how to best achieve student attendance success should be considered.
- f. Are there existing responsive/emergency options for when young people have community safety concerns?
  - i. Review school plans and protocols around lockdowns and early dismissals).
  - ii. Parents are expressing they do not feel safe allowing students to take public transportation or have neighborhood concerns bringing their children to school.
  - iii. Consider Capacity Expansion to Promise Rides – Department of For Hire Vehicles
  - iv. Explore existing surplus resources (vans) that could be leveraged to support these efforts. There could be a pathway to employment opportunities (consider creating a program that assists parents to get CDL licenses or provide paid opportunities for parents to support community transportation for kids in their neighborhood).
- g. Ask students/parents what they need to safety get to and from school.

- (3) **Mental and Behavioral Health:** JJAG recommends assessment design consider available mental and behavioral health resources and strategies available in schools.
- a. Considerations should include whether there are assessments/evaluations available outside of the context of IEP/504 plans that can lead to identifying and implementing behavioral intervention plans, current SST processes in schools, and points of access for students to request or receive resources (e.g., referral from a teacher or parent required, or students independently request support).
  - b. Identify the types of school-based mental and behavioral health resources offered (e.g., contractors v. internal staff, restorative justice programs, social emotional learning supports).
  - c. Scan for any existing efforts being conducted by DME/OSSE around vacancies in school based mental health staff or related school-based mental and behavioral health interventions.
  - d. Identify whether schools have behavioral intervention protocols or partners that manage behavioral interventions or mental health resource referral and implementation protocols.
  - e. Determine if deployment of these resources includes intentional inclusion of youth, family, or trusted adult in the young person’s life to determine appropriate resources, interventions, and supports.
- (4) **Community safety:** JJAG recommends considering community safety concerns, like violent crime, and an assessment of disparities in safety features around schools.  
Considerations should include:
- a. Safety walk scanning for schools that do not have school zone signage or clear pedestrian crossing signs and related safety features like speed bumps.
  - b. Identify schools that have been impacted by community violence at high levels and what supports are in place or are needed.
  - c. Consider school and community feedback around implementation of safety supports, in particular, the Safe Passage program. Consider recommendations around alignment and implementation of Safe Passage Programs to ensure fidelity to the program model and integration into the school environment to develop trust and consistent presence with students.
  - d. Identify where programs like “walking school bus” or other community-led supports are helping students get to school in areas identified as “hot” blocks for violence.
- (5) **Staffing** – JJAG developed a separate resolution around staffing and continues to support consideration of increased staffing to support care coordination for students at risk of chronic absenteeism and truancy. See JJAG Previous Resolution on Enhanced Responses to Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism.
- a. For the purposes of this assessment, consider reviewing data available on current vacancy rates and common vacancies by job title in the assessment.
  - b. Moreover, JJAG highly encourages that training needs of school-based staff be considered, as training and resources for our school-based staff and providers is a critical

part of creating the school-based culture and climate that helps young people engage in education.

- c. Consider needs for enhanced or refresher training on trauma informed care, restorative approaches, cultural competency, social emotional learning opportunities, and focusing on the whole child. Determine whether training around the principles of these strategies and implementation of the strategies, as well as how they can work together in the school environment is available, occurring on a regular basis, and being utilized.
- d. Consider the self-care and wellness resources available to staff and providers.

JJAG recommends the assessment(s) be conducted and published within one year and that the assessment(s) be utilized to develop a strategic plan to direct resources to or make strategic investments that address the disparities. An affixed timeline is purposefully included to establish a sense of urgency, as this resolution highlights current and persistent challenges for students and families and absenteeism rates continue to trend upward.

JJAG recommends the Mayor appoint the appropriate entity or entities to conduct the assessment(s) but encourages that this work be conducted in partnership with the OSSE Education Research Practice Partnership and the Mayor's Office of Racial Equity. Additional and intentional collaboration with the following parties is also strongly encouraged: the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) to include the Office for the Students In Care of DC and Every Day Counts, the Office of the Student Advocate, the State Board of Education, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Public Charter School Board, DC Public Schools, and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

Moreover, JJAG acknowledges conducting assessments of this scale and publishing a report requires resourcing (e.g., funding and staff capacity). Therefore, this resolution acknowledges a need to appropriately scope and identify necessary resources to facilitate this project.